

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) commends the European Union's recent adoption of [Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief](#), as well as a recent [report](#) on religious freedom by a cross-party group in the British parliament.

"We are very pleased that the European Union has committed to prioritizing freedom of religion or belief in its external human rights policy and welcome its joining the vital—and growing—worldwide effort to ensure religious freedom for all," said Professor Robert P. George, USCIRF chairman. "The report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on International Religious Freedom in the British parliament provides key recommendations for future activities by the British government."

The EU-wide effort joins the work of several EU member governments, such as Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom, as well the [European Parliament's working group on freedom of religion or belief](#)

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), which created USCIRF, the State Department's International Religious Freedom Office, and its Ambassador-at-Large, serves as the blueprint for how the United States seeks to incorporate religious freedom in its human rights and foreign policies. Canada recently took a positive step forward on behalf of religious freedom abroad by creating [an international religious freedom office and ambassador](#) in its foreign ministry.

“Religious freedom is a necessary condition for stable, successful societies, and thus for a peaceful world. We are very encouraged by these recent initiatives by the EU and its member governments to give religious freedom the prominence it deserves in foreign policy. The EU's guidelines and member governments' efforts are important steps forward, yet much work remains,” said Professor George. “To quote the British All-Party Parliamentary Group report, freedom of religion or belief is still an ‘orphaned right.’ We hope that the EU and its member states will carry out these new guidelines robustly, through their collective diplomacy and development efforts.”